

## The Field Trip

*by Nancy Zuegel*

Nancy filed onto the bus with the rest of the fifth graders, bag lunch in one hand and her least favorite article of clothing in the other hand. Her mom always made her carry her light grey, cardigan sweater everywhere, because she said that drafts create colds. Usually when mothers get chilly, they act as temperature gauges for their daughters and make them apply an additional layer of clothing.

Besides the bag lunch and the unwanted sweater, her knee-socks were not cooperating at all. They had been borrowed from her sister who was known as the household elastic killer. The stretchy-stuff was definitely dead in these socks which were a grimy pink color, compliments of the old washer in the basement that altered garment color with each washing.

Wondering if the contents of her bagged lunch were going to be as rotten as the first part of her day had been, Nancy peeked inside the bag. A summer-sausage sandwich with butter, a few generic corn chips and one of those tiny candy bars the company labeled as "fun-sized," were available within the confines of her paper sack. Moms always make sandwiches with butter for field trips because they spoil less easily than those with mayonnaise.

All this gear just for another field trip to the Museum of Science and Industry. In most cases, the floor plan of the building was memorized by suburbanite grade-schoolers before entering the third grade; and, if they were allowed to buy their lunches, the museum's cafeteria services were rated on a scale which ran from gross to "almost as good as McDonald's." Having the option to buy pop was considered the only definite plus on the museum's behalf. The place already had a few points against it because of its distance. Twenty-five minutes on the expressway in an orange bus was irritating, and especially embarrassing if you had to sit next to one of the room-mothers the whole way there. Nancy knew that with the luck she had been having that she'd get stuck sitting next to either Robbie Allendorf's mom or Lisa Thurmer's mom. They were both obese, and could easily fill a bus seat by themselves without an extra, neighboring fifth grade body.

During the ride downtown, Nancy thought about how she hated field trips, and how vividly she remembered falling in the Brookfield Zoo stepping-stone-pond on her first field trip. These excursions were always awful, and this one was no exception!

Her knee socks continued to fall to her ankles, and, as she glanced out the bus window, a flying gum wrapper jetted past her face from a few windows in front of her. Robbie Allendorf then turned around in his seat and blew a bubble the size of a large lightbulb at her. It collapsed on his face and simultaneously he made a disgusting smirk back at her. Nancy slithered lower into the uncomfortable green, plastic bus seat and covered her head with the grey sweater.

The day had just begun and already she wanted to take the "L" home.